RAJYA SABHA

Friday, the 6th September, 1991/15th Bhadra, 1913 (Saka)

The House met at eleven of the clock, **Mr. Chairman** in the Chair.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

Scrapping of new series of price index

161. SHRI MOHAMMED AMIN: Will the Minister of LABOUR be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government have unilaterally introduced a New Series of Price Index with 1982 as the base year for the working class;

(b) whether it is also a fact that all the trade unions have demanded scraping of the new series; and

(c) if so, what is Government's reaction thereto?

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF LABOUR (SHRI PABAN SINGH GHATOWAR): (a) No, Sir.

(b) and (c) A statement is laid on the Table of the House.

Statement

The series of Consumer Price Index with 1982 as the base year had been introduced from October, 1988 after wide-ranging tripartite consultations at the National as well as regional levels. The Government had tried to meet as many of the objections made in this regard as was possible. The question of scrapping of the Consumer Price Index as fixed does not arise at this stage.

SHRI MOHAMMED AMIN: Sir, from the reply given by the Minister it seems that the Government is of the opinion that the problem is over. But it is not so. There is widespread discontentment among the workers as well as the trade unions. Therefore, I want to know from the Minister as to what caused the Government to change the base year from 1960 to 1982. This is part (a) of my question. And part (b) of my question is as to what method is adopted to make the studies of working class family budget.

THE MINISTER OF STATE (INDEPENDENT CHARGE) OF THE MINISTRY OF COAL (SHRI P. A. SANGMA): Sir, I beg to differ with the hon. Member. Our intention is not to say that the problem is over. The problem cannot be over, Sir, because this is such a complex problem. Then we always have to discuss about it, and we have always to rectify it. The Government has a very open mind. And, in fact, yesterday, in the Lok Sabha I had stated that while Government has no intention of scrapping it because it is not possible to scrap it, as far as the new survey of the family living is concerned, the Government has got an open mind. This is what I stated in the Lok Sabha.

Sir, the family living survey is required by convention to be made once in every ten years. It was made in 60s, 70s and 80s, the last one being in the 80s. Now it is already due even by convention. So, we are already at it and we hope to take a decision on it soon. Now, what made it to change from 1960 base to 1982 base is that 1960 one was already an old survey and, therefore, it needs to be upgraded, it needs to be changed. And even now, with 1982 as base year, there is a lot of demand for change. Therefore, change has to be there because the conditions also change.

Sir, as far as the method is concerned, the method adopted is that the Government had appointed actually two Committees in the past, one is known as Rath Committee, the other is called Seal Committee—they are, what you call, Technical Committees. The principle which is adopted is determined by a Technical Committee. And they give the guidelines.

And on the basis of the guildelines issued by that particular Technical Committee, the Experts Committee which is entrusted with the survey work does the survey work. After having done the survey work, then the report is submitted And then it is discussed at the tripartite level, both at the national level and at the regional level. As far as the present price index is concerned, it was discussed first at the national level which I had the privilege of chairing because at that time I was the Labour Minister. That was on 8-1-1987.

This was followed by regional tripartite consultation and we had regional tripartite consultations at Kanpur on 28-2-87, Madras 3-3-87, Bombay 6-3-87, Delhi 18-3-87 and Calcutta 2-7-87 and after that we had a national workshop on 30-10-87, and the last meeting was on 6-10-88. Therefore, it would not be correct to say that the Government has decided unilaterally, which the hon. Member has alleged. There were wide-ranging consultations and it was after the wide-ranging consultations that this was introduced.

SHRI MOHAMMED AMIN: From the reply of the Minister it seems that the operation is successful but the patient is dying. (*Interruptions*)

The question is that this sector was ignored altogether and proper weightage was also not given to the food items, etc. Therefore, the technical committee's and the experts' opinion has caused damage to the credibility of the Government. Therefore, I would like to ask, is the Government prepared to call a meeting of all the Central trade unions to discuss this particular question so that the misgivings and the feelings of workers who are agitating, is gone, and it works smoothly?

SHRI P. A. SANGMA: Sir, actually I would not agree that proper weightage has not been given to food items. Actually in the survey there were altogether 175 items in the basket. Now, out of 175 items food was the first item and the weightage that was given was 12.44 per cent. which is the highest among the items in the basket. Therefore, we had given proper weightage to food items.

Now, as far as calling a meeting is concerned, Sir. as I have already said, the Government will call a meeting.

श्री जगदीश प्रसाद माथुर: श्रीमन्, मंत्री महोदय ने बताया कि ट्रेड टाइट बाजार करते हैं । लेकिन त्रुटि कहां होती है, इसका पता आपने लगाया ? जब बाजार में प्राइसेज को देखने के लिए जाते हैं तो उसमें मजदूरों के प्रतिनिधि नहीं होते हैं । दूसरे, ए०एल०ओ० के जो नर्म्स हैं क्या आप उनको ठीक से ऑब्जर्व करते हैं ? आप होल सेल प्राइस इंडेक्स लेते हैं । तो मैं पूछना चाहता हूं कि आप नए सिरे से क्या सर्वे करेंगे ? जब बाजार भाव देखने जाएंगे तो क्या आप मजदूरों के प्रतिनिधियों को भी साथ ले जाएंगे जो आइ० एल० जो० के नर्म्स हैं उनको भी आप ऑब्जर्व करेंगे ?

SHRI P. A. SANGMA: Sir, there has been a consistent demand from the trade union leaders that while the team conducts the survey it should be guided by the tripartite committee. That demand is there. Now, we will have to take a view on that. And I think that that matter also can be discussed when the Government calls for a meeting of the trade union leaders or tripartite meeting before we finalise the new survey team.

SHRI JAGDISH PRASAD MATHUR: Are you prepared to take the labour representatives while going to the market?

SHRI P. A. SANGMA: That is what I am saying. Even this point can be discussed.

Now, having agreed to call a tripartite meeting to discuss the whole issue I would not like to say that we

will go in this particular direction, otherwise there is no point in calling a tripartite meeting. I think we should not lay down the criteria here and now and we should discuss it with leaders.

MR. CHAIRMAN: What about the ILO norms?

SHRI P. A. SANGMA: The ILO directive is also there that survey should be made once in every ten years.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Are you following the ILO norms when deciding about it?

SHRI JAGDISH PRASAD MATHUR: What are the ILO norms?

SHRI P. A. SANGMA: Sir, ILO does not give strict directions on that. It is not possible because the economic conditions differ from country to country. So, while exercising we will have to take into account the economic situation of the country. Therefore, the norms differ from country to country. We do follow the ILO norms to the extent possible.

SHRI PRAGADA KOTAIAH: Sir, certain States have adopted the price index of other States. It is not necessary that the State Government should have applied or observed the Price index of the other States. But as far as Andhra Pradesh Government is concerned, for the benefit of the labour, they are taking the price index of Madras. The workers want that the price index at ILO norms or Eluru Price index should be taken as the basis. Why and how this is being done?

SHRI P. A. SANGMA: Sir, I have already said that this is determined by the Technical Advisory Committee on statistics, prices and cost of living. It is they who determine the criteria, how to go about it and what are the commodities to be included in the basket. It is the committee which gives the guidelines. As far as the present situation is concerned, still the committee accepts the guidelines of the Technical Advisory Committee on statistics, prices and cost of living and strictly on that basis they proceed.

Now there are State Governments who do not strictly follow the procedure that we have adopted. One hon. Member has given a suggestion that the Tripartite Committee should be taken into confidence and that should supervise the survey. That practice is followed in certain States. It differs from State to State. But as far as the Central Government is concerned, we go strictly by the guidelines issued by the Technical Advisory Committee.

MR. CHAIRMAN: His question is: are there some States using the index of other States?

SHRI PRAGADA KOTAIAH: Sir, my question has not been answered. Is the Andhra Pradesh Government adopting the price index of Madras? Why is it so? While the workers want Eluru Price index.

SHRI P. A. SANGMA: Sir, we have also adopted the price index of Madras.

SHRI N. E. BALARAM: Sir, I would like to know from the Minister on two counts: one on the question of enlarging the basket and second proper heavy weightage to food articles. What I found from this index is that the weightage given to the food articles was comparable to the weightage given to the other items and this time it is only round about 10 per cent. If this is the position how could he say that he is prepared to accept and listen to our views and he is facing the problem with an open mind? He met the trade unions three or four times: I don't know whether he met or the former Minister met the trade unions. They were emphasising on these two counts: one on enlarging the basket and second, increasing weightage for food articles. I think, when you introduced this new index both these counts were not properly taken up.

SHRI P. A. SANGMA: Sir, if we compare the criteria adopted in 1960 and 1982 series, we find a lot of improvement. I want to submit before the House that while determining the Consumer Price Index whatever method we adopt, I don't think any method is going to be a foolproof method or any method can be universally accepted. I do not think it is possible. Therefore, there has to be some difference; that we always admit.

Now, as far as 1962 and 1982 series are concerned, I am to make a little correction. There was a small mistake in what I said earlier; I am sorry. For example, in 1960 series, the centres covered were 50; in 1982 series, the number was raised to 70. In 1960 series, sectors covered were only 3, and in 1982 series, we have covered 7 sectors. Now the markets covered in 1960 series were 142 and in 1982, the number rose to 226. Coming to families covered, in 1960 the number was 22,460, and in 1982 it was 32,660. Now the items covered—I made a mistake there—there were 175 items in the basket in 1990; actually the number is 260 and I stand corrected.

Therefore, we find that there has been some progress as far as this is concerned.

Now we go to new family living survey which I assured, and there has been a demand to include more items in the basket and also that more weightage should be given to food items. All these things can be discussed in the tripartite committee that we are going to convene before we go in for a final survey.

*162. [*The questioners (Shrimati Kailashpati and Shrimati Veena Verma) were absent. For answer* vide col. 30-32 infra]

*163. [*The questioner (Shri Suresh Kalmadi) was absent. For answer* vide col. 32 infra]

Distribution of Dhara Oil through PDS

*164. DR. BAPU KALDATE:†
SHRI A. G. KULKARNI:

Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether any decision has been taken for distribution of Dhara Oil through the Public Distribution System to check the possibility of black marketing; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI MULLAPPALLY RAMACHANDRAN): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

डा० बापू काल्दाते: सभापति जी, यह जो जवाब दिया गया है इसपर ध्यान देने की जरूरत है । महाराष्ट्र में खाद्य तेल बहुत कम मात्रा में दिये गये हैं । सरकार ने पब्लिक डिस्ट्रिब्यूशन सिस्टम के माध्यम से महाराष्ट्र में बहुत कम मात्रा में तेल दिया है । कल ही इस पर एक सवाल था। 5 सितम्बर का अनस्टार्ड क्वेश्चन नं० 565 है जिसमें मंत्री महोदय ने कहा है कि जनवरी से लेकर अगस्त तक जो खाद्य तेल दिया गया है उसमें इम्पोर्टेड एडीबल आयल 10 हजार टन है । महाराष्ट्र की रिक्वायरमेंट पर किलोग्राम, पर मन्थ, पर कार्ड होल्डर जो है वह 15 हजार 7 सौ टन है । इस प्रकार से एक महीने की जो डिमान्ड है उससे भी कम जनवरी से अगस्त तक मिला है । अभी महाराष्ट्र में गौरी का त्यौहार आने वाला है और गणश का त्यौहार आने वाला है । अगर सरकार छः महीने में एक महीने का भी तेल नहीं दे सकती है तो आगे आने वाले दिनों में क्या करेगी, यह हमारी समझ में नहीं आता है । इसलिए हमारी बराबर मांग रही है कि यह जो "धारा" वाला तेल

†The question was actually asked on the floor of the House by Dr. Bapu Kaldate.